

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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QUIET, ROUTINE MORNING FOR DERBY HOPEFULS ON DERBY EVE

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, May 4, 2018) – On a warm and breezy Friday morning at Churchill Downs all entrants for Saturday's 144th running of the \$2,192,000 Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) stretched their legs.

Twenty of the 21 entrants were on the fast track in the 5:45-6 a.m. training window reserved for Kentucky Derby and Oaks horses.

Mendelssohn came out at 6:50 a.m. (all times Eastern) accompanied by his three stablemates, who will be running in stakes prior to the Run for the Roses.

At scratch time at 9 o'clock, none of the 20 entrants had been declared from the race thus keeping **Blended Citizen**, an also-eligible, out of the race.

KENTUCKY DERBY UPDATE

AUDIBLE/MAGNUM MOON/NOBLE INDY/VINO ROSSO – Final touches were applied to the **Todd Pletcher** Derby quartet Friday morning when the foursome galloped between 10 and 11 furlongs during the special 5:45 to 6 a.m. training period limited to Derby and Oaks horses only.

"That's all there is," said the seven-time Eclipse Award and two-time Derby winning conditioner as he walked his charges back to Barn 40 at Churchill Downs, figuratively dusting his hands at the conclusion of their preparations for Derby 144 Saturday.

"I don't put my horses on the track on race day, so we're done," he continued. "The last few days coming up to a race like this you get a bit anxious. You want everything to be finished and the horses to be back in the barn and ready to go. We're there now and I have to be happy with our current situation."

The four colts had their regular exercise riders attached Friday – **Amelia Green** on Florida Derby (GI) winner **Audible**; **Nick Bush** on Arkansas Derby (GI) kingpin **Magnum Moon**; **Carlos Cano** on Louisiana Derby (GII) hero **Noble Indy**, and **Adele Bellinger** on Wood Memorial star **Vino Rosso**.

Cano, a native of Guatemala who has been in the U.S. since 1995, was asked what he enjoyed most about his partner leading up to his Derby run.

"He's an easy one to work with," the veteran exercise rider said. "He's easy to gallop and he does what you ask him to do. No real struggles with him."

Cano has worked in the Pletcher barn for the past 13 years. Prior to that he'd worked in Ocala, Florida, helping to break and train young horses for several trainers, including Pletcher's father, **J.J.**

"I like working for him (the younger Pletcher). Very much. Mucho!" Cano said with emphasis and a smile.

J.J. Pletcher was on hand to watch the final exercise by his son's Derby bunch. The younger Pletcher noted that his immediate family was already in Louisville with the exception of his oldest son, **Payton**, who would fly in Friday night after he finished up one final exam today in College Station, Texas, where he is concluding his first year at Texas A&M University.

Audible is owned by the four-way partnership of **China Horse Club International**, **Head of Plains Partners**, **Starlight Racing** and **WinStar Farm**. Magnum Moon goes in the silks of **Lawana** and **Robert Low**. Noble Indy races for **WinStar Farm** and **Repole Stable**, while Vino Rosso's connections are **Repole Stable** and **St. Elias Stable**.

Their riders for the world's most famous race are **Javier Castellano** (on Audible), **Luis Saez** (Magnum Moon), **Florent Geroux** (Noble Indy) and **John Velazquez** (Vino Rosso).

BLENDED CITIZEN – The clock struck midnight – so to speak – for **Greg Hall** and **SAYJAY Racing**'s **Blended Citizen** Friday morning at 9 o'clock, the last chance for an also-eligible to draw into Derby 144.

Trainer **Doug O'Neill** and his right-hand man, **Jack Sisterson**, rode their hand out all the way trying to make the Derby field with their Proud Citizen colt, but it wasn't to be. He was No. 21 on the entry list and the first 20 were the final 20 for this year's Run for the Roses.

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Sisterson gave exercise rider **Jonny Garcia** one last leg up wearing his bright yellow Derby towel Friday morning at 5:45, then watched him gallop a mile and three eighths.

"Well," Sisterson said philosophically pondering their fate, "we don't mind. We gave it our best. We'll get another chance with him another day."

BOLT D'ORO – Ruis Racing LLC's **Bolt d'Oro** galloped 1 ½ miles and jogged 1 ½ miles under **Jose Velazquez** at Churchill Downs Friday morning.

The son of Medaglia d'Oro finished up his gallop a little faster than trainer **Mick Ruis** was looking for when his competitive spirit was sparked by Derby entrant **Free Drop Billy**, who galloped along inside of him.

"Jose will be [upset], but it just shows how good Bolt is feeling right now," Ruis said. "It's no big deal."

Ruis is planning to wear his trademark white T-shirt for Bolt d'Oro's Kentucky Derby run.

"I told my wife, 'I'm wearing a white T-shirt. I made my money wearing a white T-shirt.' She said, 'Well, the rest of us will look good,'" Ruis said. "I'll wear a sports coat and my jeans."

Victor Espinoza will ride Bolt d'Oro for the first time Saturday.

BRAVAZO – Calumet Farm's Risen Star (GII) winner **Bravazo** completed his Kentucky Derby training by jogging once around the racetrack and visiting the paddock during the 5:45 a.m. training time allotted for Oaks and Derby horses. Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**, who is seeking his fifth "Run for the Roses" victory, said everything was "fine" with the Awesome Again colt as he entertained several visitors Friday morning, including this grandson **Brady**.

COMBATANT – Winchell Thoroughbreds and Willis Horton's **Combatant** went out at 5:45 Friday morning and completed his Derby training with a routine 1 ½ mile gallop with **Angel Garcia** on board.

On Saturday, jockey **Ricardo Santana Jr.**, who has been among trainer **Steve Asmussen**'s go-to riders since 2013, will ride in his third consecutive Derby for his main client. He was 13th with his first mount, **Creator**, in 2016 and finished 12th last year aboard **Untrapped**. Since forming their partnership, the Hall of Fame trainer and Santana Jr. have won 389 races together, including 48 stakes. Of those 48 stakes, 19 of them were graded.

"The thing I like about Ricardo is he's always positive," Asmussen said. "He came in the paddock Tuesday right after we drew the 20 hole and told us we didn't have anything to worry about. He liked our post position."

ENTICED – Godolphin LLC's **Enticed** galloped 1 ½ miles under exercise rider **Jason Gracia** Friday morning.

"He went great. He's ready," trainer **Kiaran McLaughlin** said.

Enticed is one of five horses in the Derby field to own a win over the Churchill Downs track – joining **Free Drop Billy**, **Promises Fulfilled**, **Bravazo** and **Combatant**, who all broke their maidens at the home of the Derby. The son of Medaglia d'Oro captured the 1 1/16-mile Kentucky Jockey Club (GII) in November, giving his trainer confidence that it will be a factor in getting the 1 ¼-mile distance.

"We feel like it shouldn't be an issue with his pedigree. He won here in November at a mile and a sixteenth. Even though he was second at a mile and an eighth (in the GII Wood Memorial), he got bumped pretty hard and ran really well," McLaughlin said. "We're not concerned. We think it could be a plus for him as an individual and his pedigree."

Junior Alvarado has the return mount aboard Enticed.

FIRENZE FIRE – Mr. Amore Stable's **Firenze Fire** galloped a mile Friday morning at Churchill Downs.

The **Jason Servis**-trained colt was bred by his owner **Ron Lombardi**, who has taken special satisfaction in bringing a homebred to the Kentucky Derby, noting that the son of Poseidon's Warrior was among a crop of more than 20,000.

"He's beaten 20,000. Now, he has to beat 19 more," Lombardi said.

Firenze Fire drew the No. 1 post position.

"It'll be OK. He usually breaks good and we take him back. Tomorrow, if he breaks good we won't take him back. Hopefully, he'll get good position into the first turn," Lombardi said.

Paco Lopez is scheduled to ride the Champagne Stakes (GI) winner for the first time.

FLAMEAWAY – John Oxley's **Flameaway** jogged one lap around the track and galloped one under regular rider **Chris Garraway** during the 5:45-6:00 training period for Kentucky Derby and Oaks horses.

Flameaway will be ridden by jockey **Jose Lezcano** in the Derby, and will break from post position four.

Trainer **Mark Casse**'s ideal setup for the race is to "Sit just right behind the speed," he said. "And turning for home I'd like to be on the lead."

FREE DROP BILLY/PROMISES FULFILLED – Trainer **Dale Romans'** duo of Blue Grass (GII) third **Free Drop Billy** and Fountain of Youth (GII) winner **Promises Fulfilled** galloped 1 ½ miles Friday morning at 5:45.

“It’s the longest but best week of the year,” Romans said. “There is so much build up for the Derby – I’m just ready to win one.”

GOOD MAGIC – The 2017 Eclipse Award-winning champion 2-Year-Old Male **Good Magic**, owned by **e Five Racing Thoroughbreds & Stonestreet Stables LLC**, galloped 1 3/8 miles under exercise rider **Walter Malasquez** during the early Derby training session.

“Same as what we’ve been doing,” said trainer **Chad Brown**. “He looks good. We’re all done training now. He’ll just walk tomorrow morning.”

The Curlin colt never raced on an off track and Brown concedes that even he doesn’t know exactly what to expect if the track is listed as anything but fast.

“I don’t have a strong feeling either way,” Brown said. “He doesn’t have a race where he’s been in those conditions yet so I wouldn’t know for certain but I’m optimistic he’d handle it.”

HOFBURG – **Juddmonte Farms Inc.**’s homebred Florida Derby (G1) runner-up **Hofburg** was out during the early Derby training session for a 1 3/8 miles gallop under regular exercise rider **Penny Gardiner**.

“He had a nice gallop,” said Hall of Fame trainer **Bill Mott**. “We’re just trying to keep it simple from this point on. Nothing fancy, just get there.”

Mott was not concerned with the threat of rain for Saturday, in part because he has seen over the years how Churchill Downs can handle it.

“As long as they have it sealed well I think we’ll be fine,” he said. “I’m sure if they’re looking at rain they’re going to seal it and have it where the horses can get over the top of it. I can’t be sure about it but I think he’d handle that type of track OK. I don’t think they’re going to let the track get that deep; they would get it packed down before the rain, I would think.”

INSTILLED REGARD – **OXO Equine LLC**’s **Jerry Hollendorfer**-trained Kentucky Derby (GI) contender **Instilled Regard** left Barn 41 at 5:45 a.m. with exercise rider **Edgar Rodriguez** aboard to train the day before his toughest test.

“He jogged back to the paddock and galloped a mile and a half,” said **Jerry Hollendorfer**, his Hall of Fame conditioner.

While his trainer has won three Kentucky Oaks (**Lite Light** in 1991, **Pike Place Dancer** in 1996 and **Blind Luck** in 2010), his best finish in the Kentucky Derby is last year’s third-place effort by **Battle of Midway**. He will be Hollendorfer’s seventh starter in the 1 ¼-miles classic.

Instilled Regard, who has won two of seven and earned \$294,000, was on the cusp of not making it into the body of the 20-horse field based on the Kentucky Derby qualification points system. As the proverbial cookie of the field crumbled through defections, the son of Arch rounded his way into the sweet spot.

“We didn’t know right away if we would get in,” Hollendorfer explained. “He was just training regularly. Once we found out we would get in, we gave him his final preparation, his last work, at Santa Anita.”

Instilled Regard will break from post 15 on Saturday in what is by far the largest field he has faced. In his career, he has drawn outside the six-hole only once, when winning the Lecomte Stakes (GIII) from post nine of 13 on Jan. 13 at Fair Grounds.

“When I ran Lite Light and Pike Place Dancer in the Oaks, those were not full fields or anywhere even near it,” he said. “I don’t know what caused more people to run in those races, but it’s blossomed into a huge, major media event – both the Oaks and the Derby. It seems like every year it gets more publicity.”

JUSTIFY/SOLOMINI – Both of Hall of Fame trainer **Bob Baffert**’s Kentucky Derby entrants galloped one mile during the early Derby training session. As has been the process all week, **China Horse Club International Ltd., Head of Plains Partners, Starlight Racing** and **WinStar Farm LLC**’s **Justify** went out first under exercise rider **Humberto Gomez**, who came straight back to the track with **Zayat Stables LLC, Mrs. John Magnier, Michael B. Tabor & Derrick Smith**’s **Solomini**.

The constantly changing forecast for Saturday includes a threat of afternoon showers, which is of no concern for Baffert.

“A little rain is good for this racetrack but really it doesn’t matter,” he said. “I don’t worry about any of that and I don’t worry about anything I can’t change.”

LONE SAILOR – **G M B Racing**’s **Lone Sailor** galloped 1 ½ miles at 5:45 a.m. Friday with exercise rider **Maurice Sanchez** aboard for trainer **Tom Amoss**.

Lone Sailor will represent the sixth Derby starter for Amoss, whose best finish came with **Mylute** (fifth) in 2013. Jockey **James Graham** will be riding in his first Derby.

MENDELSSOHN – Michael B. Tabor, Mrs. John Magnier and Derrick Smith’s Kentucky Derby (GI) contender **Mendelssohn** had his second feel of the Churchill Downs racing surface on Friday morning. Smith was on hand to watch the exercise along with jockey **Ryan Moore**, who will guide the son of Scat Daddy from post 15 Saturday.

Much like Thursday, the **Aidan O’Brien** trainee was the third of a single-filed Coolmore quartet, led by American Turf (GII) entrant **Threeandfourpence** and Pat Day Mile (GIII) entrant **Seahenge**. The foursome was trailed by Old Forester Turf Classic (GI) entrant **Deauville**, a Grade I winner making his fifth trip to North America in what is his 19th career start.

The four O’Brien pupils entered the main track at the five-eighths gap at 6:50 a.m. and proceeded to walk and jog a clockwise 1½ miles, much like Thursday. They then reversed course and cantered one mile before exiting through the same gap and heading back to Barn 17. Exercise rider **Dean Gallagher** was aboard Mendelssohn.

“He just did a gentle canter yesterday and just did a little bit quicker today, but it’s really just showing him around the place and the track,” O’Brien said of the half-brother to four-time champion **Beholder** and top sire **Into Mischief**. “We’ve been very happy with him. We haven’t overdone him. It’s only been five weeks since Dubai and of course four weeks with the travel. He had a good, strong race in Dubai. He’s here fresh, rather than (having been) hard on him, if you know what I mean.”

O’Brien, who broke the world record for Grade/Group I wins in a single year with 28 in 2017, only has one GI win on the dirt: **Johannesburg** in the 2001 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (GI). He is attempting to win the Kentucky Derby for the first time with what is his best chance since Johannesburg finished eighth in 2002. For the first time, though, O’Brien brings a horse who has a two-turn victory over a dirt surface, having annexed the UAE Derby (GII) on March 31 at Dubai’s Meydan Racecourse by 18½ lengths in a track record 1:55.18 for 1,900m.

As a 2-year-old, the \$3 million Keeneland September Sale topper broke his maiden at The Curragh at second asking over a mile before finishing a game runner-up behind stablemate and champion **US Navy Flag** in England’s top juvenile race, the Darley Dewhurst (GI) at Newmarket over seven furlongs. Both sent to Del Mar to compete at the Breeders’ Cup, the pair parted paths, with US Navy Flag finishing 10th in the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (GI) on dirt and Mendelssohn overpowering the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Turf (GI) to close out his season.

“We gave Johannesburg one prep (in the Group III Gladness Stakes) and we obviously gave (Mendelssohn) a prep at Dundalk over the artificial surface,” O’Brien explained. “Coming up to last year’s Breeders’ Cup, when he was second in the Dewhurst, ‘The Lads’ (owners Tabor, **John Magnier** and Smith) always thought that he could be a Kentucky Derby horse and we felt he had a chance of acting on the dirt, so we had a decision to make of whether we would stay on the grass with him or switch him to dirt. At the time, we had US Navy Flag and he had won two Group Is on the grass and obviously Mendelssohn hadn’t, so rather than make too big a change, we decided to give him a chance to win a Group I on the turf with the view that we could train him over the winter with the Kentucky Derby in mind.”

“We were very lucky that Churchill and HRI put on a kind of Kentucky Derby trial in our part of the world at Dundalk and that was at the perfect distance at the perfect time,” O’Brien continued. “It was a little bit of an introduction for him, coming from the grass to an artificial surface. Obviously it wasn’t dirt, but it was different from grass and we felt that if that went well, then the next (race) would be Dubai, where it would be dirt and the trip would be further. We weren’t sure how far he would get. Obviously he’s a horse with a lot of pace and he got a mile well at Dundalk. We were delighted he got the nine and a half furlongs at Meydan over the dirt, which is a tough surface. He has progressed nicely and has passed every test we have asked him to pass so far and that’s why we are here today.”

A vocal horse and easily heard animal in the barn and on the track, the leading earner in the 20-horse Kentucky Derby field (\$1,961,137) has no shortage of audible or visible personality when training and that has been on display in his two trips to the Churchill Downs main track.

“He has a big personality, we always try to encourage our horses to develop a personality, and he has developed a big one,” O’Brien explained. “Even though he’s vocal and cries out and calls to other horses, he’s not coltish and doesn’t draw or show. It’s more a mental thing than anything. As we were training him last year, when we put the blinkers on him, it totally focused his mind. It’s amazing how an inch on either side of his eye totally changes his focus. The minute you put those on, he totally focuses, so we don’t want to change him too much. He’s slowly growing up mentally and physically, so that’s where we are, really.”

At his aforementioned purchase price, Mendelssohn was the most expensive yearling of his generation sold at auction in 2016.

“He’s a very special-looking horse physically and, with his pedigree, he came to us as a top-rated horse. Usually those horses, if things go right, they have a big shot,” O’Brien said. “Meydan is a proper dirt surface and Dean was very happy with how he went over this surface.”

“He’s drawn out (in post 14) a little bit, but talking to the American trainers like **Bob (Baffert)** and **Wayne (Lukas)**, they thought they wouldn’t mind being out where we are, so I see that as a positive. Obviously, they would know a lot more about dirt racing than I would. I’d imagine he would be somewhere forward (during the race), but I’ll leave that up to Ryan. I think there’s pace on his inside and (**Justify**) is on his inside, as well. He made (the front) at Meydan, but I wouldn’t be sure he would make it here, but that would be Ryan’s decision when the gates open.”

“It would be something we couldn’t really dream of, to win this race,” O’Brien concluded. “We feel so privileged to be here and have a horse who can compete.”

MY BOY JACK – The stretch-running colt teamed up with an old friend Friday morning when he went for a gallop of about a mile during the 5:45 to 6 training session for Derby and Oaks horses at Churchill Downs.

Instead of his regular Kentucky exercise rider, **Peedy Landry**, he had attached the French lass **Manon Lemaire**, who is his normal exercise partner back at home base for trainer **Keith Desormeaux**'s stable in Southern California.

Lemaire came to Louisville with her steady boyfriend, one of California's foremost riders, the French transplant **Flavien Prat**, in town for the week to ride a series of mounts, including **Solomini** in Saturday's Kentucky Derby.

Desormeaux noted that he was moving just a bit slowly Friday following a visit by an old friend from Louisiana the night before. In good Cajun tradition, the friend did not come empty handed. Instead he was armed with copious amounts of homemade gumbo and the trainer admitted to polishing off two bowls of the delicious mix, which might have been one bowl too many.

"I couldn't pass it up; it was so good," he said. "But I'm still working on getting it all digested."

Desormeaux was happy with his horse's "end game" coming up to his run in the 10-furlong Derby, but left the door open to another possible gallop the day of the race.

"I don't normally put my horses on the track on race day," he said, "but it's a long day for Derby. The race doesn't go until 6:30 or so (official post is 6:46) and that's a long time for the horses to wait. I might put him out there tomorrow morning."

My Boy Jack is owned by the three-pronged partnership of **Don't Tell My Wife Stable**, **Monomoy Stables** and **West Point Thoroughbreds**. He'll be ridden by the Hall of Famer **Kent Desormeaux**, the trainer's brother.

KENTUCKY DERBY FIELD

The field for the Kentucky Derby, with riders and morning-line odds from the rail out, is: **Firenze Fire** (Paco Lopez, 50-1), **Free Drop Billy** (Robby Albarado, 30-1), **Promises Fulfilled** (Corey Lanerie, 30-1), **Flameaway** (Jose **Lezcano**, 30-1), **Audible** (Javier Castellano, 8-1), **Good Magic** (Jose Ortiz, 12-1), **Justify** (Mike Smith, 3-1), **Lone Sailor** (James Graham, 50-1), **Hofburg** (Irad Ortiz Jr., 20-1), **My Boy Jack** (Desormeaux, 30-1), **Bolt d'Oro** (Victor Espinoza, 8-1), **Enticed** (Junior Alvarado, 30-1), **Bravazo** (Luis Contreras, 50-1), **Mendelssohn** (Ryan Moore, 5-1), **Instilled Regard** (Drayden Van Dyke, 50-1), **Magnum Moon** (Luis Saez, 6-1), **Solomini** (Flavien Prat, 30-1), **Vino Rosso** (John Velazquez, 12-1), **Noble Indy** (Florent Geroux, 30-1) and **Combatant** (Ricardo Santana Jr., 50-1). **Also-eligible: Blended Citizen** (Kyle Frey, 50-1). All starters will carry 126 pounds.

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